

Note: *Through perfection of this practice, the adept becomes like the god Kamadeva. Kama means 'desire' and deva means 'master', therefore, through this practice desire is mastered and a state of balanced purification is achieved.*

BHRAMARI PRANAYAMA



Bhramari Pranayama (humming bee breath)

Sit in a comfortable meditation asana. The spinal cord should be erect, the head straight and the hands resting on the knees in chin orjuna mudra.

The ideal posture for this practice is padmasana or siddha/siddha yoni asana.

The position of nadanusandhana asana, which is used in nada yoga, may also be utilised as follows. Sit on a rolled blanket with the heels drawn up to the buttocks. Place the feet flat on the floor with the knees raised and the elbows resting on the knees. (For full details refer to Bihar School of Yoga publication *Yoga and Kriya*).

Close the eyes and relax the whole body for a short time. The lips should remain gently closed with the teeth slightly

separated throughout the practice. This allows the sound vibration to be heard and felt more distinctly in the brain. Make sure the jaws are relaxed.

Raise the arms sideways and bend the elbows, bringing the hands to the ears. Use the index or middle finger to plug the ears. The flaps of the ears may be pressed without inserting the fingers.

If the position of nadanusandhana has been assumed, plug the ears with the thumbs, resting the other four fingers on the head.

Bring the awareness to the centre of the head, where ajna chakra is located, and keep the body absolutely still.

Breathe in through the nose. Exhale slowly and in a controlled manner while making a deep, steady humming sound like that of the black bee.

The humming sound should be smooth, even and continuous for the duration of the exhalation.

The sound should be soft and mellow, making the front of the skull reverberate.

This is one round.

At the end of exhalation, breathe in deeply and repeat the process.

Perform 5 rounds.

Awareness: Physical - on the humming sound within the head and on making the breath steady and even.

Spiritual - on ajna chakra.

Duration: 5 to 10 rounds is sufficient in the beginning, then slowly increase to 10 to 15 minutes. In cases of extreme mental tension or anxiety, or when used to assist the healing process, practise for up to 30 minutes.

Time of practice: The best time to practise is late at night or in the early morning as there are fewer external noises to interfere with internal perception. Practising at this time awakens psychic sensitivity. However, bhramari may be practised at any time to relieve mental tension, providing the surroundings are peaceful.

Contra-indications: Bhramari should not be performed while lying down. People suffering from severe ear infections

should not practise this pranayama until the infection has cleared up. Those with heart disease must practise without breath retention.

Benefits: Bhramari relieves stress and cerebral tension, alleviating anger, anxiety and insomnia, and reducing blood pressure. It speeds up the healing of body tissue and may be practised after operations. It strengthens and improves the voice and eliminates throat ailments.

Advanced practice: Once the basic form of bhramari has been mastered, jalandhara and moola bandhas may be incorporated into the practice in conjunction with internal breath retention (for details of these practices refer to the section Bandha). Do not strain when performing kumbhaka, one or two seconds is sufficient at first. The duration may be increased gradually as the technique is mastered. When the head has returned to the upright position and the ears are plugged, slowly exhale producing the humming sound. As an alternative practice, contract the throat while inhaling as in ujjayi pranayama, only more strongly. In this way a humming sound can be produced on inhalation as well as exhalation.

Practice note: Bhramari pranayama induces a meditative state by harmonising the mind and directing the awareness inwards. The vibrations of the sounds create a soothing effect on the mind and nervous system. It is also an important aspect of nada yoga which uses subtle sound vibration to attune the practitioners with their true nature.

Note: *The word bhramari means 'bee' and the practice is so-called because a sound is produced which imitates that of the black bee.*